

NAB Localism Initiatives

Local News:

As part of the ongoing effort to best serve our viewers and live up to our promise of providing “Coverage You Can Count On”, WKBT management continues to invest in the stations local news product.

New technology within the past year includes a state of the art microwave live truck with full editing capability, enabling the news department to quickly respond to breaking news and weather events and a fiber line connection between WKBT in La Crosse and it’s sister station WISC in Madison, WI. The fiber line connection gives WKBT instant access to statewide stories of interest, and allows local stories generated in La Crosse to be seen in other cities all over Wisconsin.

WKBT NewsChannel 8 produces 4.5 hours of local news Monday-Friday, and 1 hour each Saturday and Sunday for a total of 24.5 hours of locally produced news programming each week.

Public information segments are an important and regular part of our local news programming. We have won several awards for our annual “Operation Fire Safe” campaign. Working in conjunction with the La Crosse Fire Department, we highlight fire safety information in every local newscast for the entire week.

Our weekday noon newscast features a “Contact” segment giving local non-profit groups an opportunity to publicize upcoming events.

Our Tuesday and Thursday 5pm newscast include our locally produced “Most Wanted” segment. We work with the La Crosse County Sheriff’s Department to target wanted criminals in our area. Thanks to viewer tips in the last two years alone, more than 70 such people have been arrested.

We work with students in the Media Department of DeSoto High School and broadcast stories that are entirely written, edited and produced by the students for our “Extra Credit” report airing during the Saturday 6pm newscast.

As a result of our ongoing partnership with the Coulee Region Humane Society, close to 500 pets have been adopted into new families thanks to our “Pet of the Week” reports in the morning newscast.

WKBT.COM has been dramatically upgraded and is updated daily with local news, weather and sports a minimum of two times a day. The website is also used when needed for breaking news and weather alerts. Viewers can watch WKBT-TV stories after they are broadcast on WKBT.COM via the “Create Your Own Newscast” link. WKBT.COM played a significant role in our 2004 political coverage (read forward).

Local Public Affairs:

1. Early News (5:30-7:00AM Monday – Friday)
 - a. Contains guest interviews with community leaders, government officials and representatives of community groups and organizations covering a wide range of public affairs topics of interest and concern to our viewers.
2. Noon News (12:00-12:30 PM Monday – Friday)
 - a. Contains guest interviews with community leaders, government officials and representatives of community groups and organizations covering a wide range of public affairs topics of interest and concern to our viewers.
3. Community Calendar

Creating Or Selecting Programming:

1. We select programming that we feel is in the best and of the most interest to our viewers. We keep track of all emails and telephone calls with regard to programming. We discuss at our weekly department head meetings program issues.
2. We have on numerous occasions preempted CBS in order to broadcast relevant and topical programming of intense local interest:

On 10/23/04 we aired a Town Hall Meeting on a very contentious School Board Referendum (preempting CBS College Football).

On 10/22/04 we aired a LIVE Debate originating from Madison, WI between US Senate candidates Feingold and Michels (preempting CBS Prime).

On 04/22/04 we aired a 2 hour Town Hall Meeting about series of alcohol related deaths of young men locally (preempting Thursday CBS Prime).

On 11/27/03, we aired an NCAA Division III Playoff Game involving the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse (preempting CBS Sports and College Football).

WKBT has regularly preempted CBS programming (both Primetime and Sports) to air University of Wisconsin Sports programming dating back to the 1990s.

Emergency Programming:

WKBT has a well deserved reputation for “Coverage You Can Count On” when it comes to live coverage of breaking news events. In recent months for example, we broke into regular programming to bring viewers information on a serious accident involving a school bus en route to a local school, and again when a downtown La Crosse business suddenly exploded and caught fire.

We have a long standing policy of “first on, last off” when it comes to severe weather coverage. The station has recently upgraded its on-air severe weather alert system, giving viewers constant updates on the exact location and movement of the storms.

WKBT added a second, state-of-the-art microwave live truck in 2004 enabling us to reach outlying counties for with our live reports.

WKBT was instrumental in launching the AMBER ALERT missing child program in our area. In fact, our local program was up and running nearly a year before the statewide program. Station personnel were instrumental in helping organize the local AMBER ALERT program, and actually produced the 7 Rivers AMBER ALERT training video used by area law enforcement agencies to teach their personnel about the program.

Political Programming:

1. - Political Programming

The 2004 election season was an extraordinary one in Wisconsin and La Crosse in particular because of our swing state status.

Working with the La Crosse County League of Women Voters, WKBT produced and aired three half hour local candidate debates as part of our effort to give voters in the 96th and 94th State Assembly districts and the 32nd State Senate district an opportunity to see the candidates in action talking about local issues of interest.

WKBT-TV's News Department produced and aired a series of Candidate Profiles for the 96th State Assembly, the 94th State Assembly and the 32nd State Senate Primary Election..

Our offer to sponsor a U.S. Senate candidate debate in La Crosse was turned down by the Feingold campaign because of scheduling conflicts. WKBT did air two one hour candidate debates between Senate candidates Feingold and Michaels that originated elsewhere in Wisconsin.

WKBT organized and produced a one-hour town hall meeting on the La Crosse School Referendum. It was the only public forum dedicated to this subject in our area and was aired two times on our station in advance of the election.

Our news department decided early in the campaign season to carry local speeches by the Presidential candidates live in their entirety. As a result, our news department produced live commercial free coverage of two local speeches by President George Bush. Had Candidate Kerry chosen to make a speech in the local area, we would have aired it. WKBT did get a one-on-one interview opportunity with VP Candidate John Edwards and aired a 2-part story as a result.

Our news department created a “get out the vote” campaign called Think-Act-Vote. We promoted the campaign heavily within all our newscasts in the three weeks leading up to Nov. 2nd as part of our news content and created promotional announcements that aired in regular programming as well.

WKBT.COM was a key component of our 2004 political election coverage. We developed a special “Campaign 2004” web presence viewers could find:

- Political Analysis links
- a list of links to all available candidate web sites
- an archive of “What You Need To Know” stories produced by CBS that compared positions of Presidential Candidates on key issues
- an archive of state/local candidate profiles produced by WKBT-TV News Department

In addition, WKBT.COM archived three half hour candidate debates which were available in their entirety on our station website.

We also used the web site to recruit questions for the candidates from viewers.

Civic, Cultural and Other Community-Responsive Programming:

1. Time Of Grace – a weekly religious half hour program that airs every Sunday at 7:00 AM.
2. On the Sunday before the 4th of July we tape the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra’s Outdoor Pops Concert and air it twice the 4th of July weekend.
3. Every winter we telecast live cut-ins of our local “Polar Plunge” to raise money for Special Olympics.
4. We have provided closed captioning since the late 1980’s.
5. WKBT-TV supports local American Red Cross “Blood Drives”, featuring live remotes from blood drive sites. NewsChannel 8 also ran stories each day in support of the blood drive.
6. Severe Weather half-hour special programming that explains warning systems and how to protect yourself during severe weather season.

7. Donated air-time valued at \$20,205 to Ad Council campaigns between January 1st and June 30, 2004. A few of the campaign names were “Reducing Gun Violence”, “Fitness/Nutrition”, “Drunk Driving Prevention”, “Mentoring”.... A complete list of campaigns supported is available in WKBT’s public file.

Music

1. Noon News contains a contact segment in which local music and artistic groups are interviewed.

Station Participation in Community Affairs (all done in calendar 2004, most are annual):

1. Chileda Shrimp Boil- produce and air spots promoting fundraiser for autism facility
2. Gardenfest- produce and air spots for YWCA fundraiser
3. Bark in the Park- produce and air promotion Humane Society fundraiser
4. La Crosse Symphony Orchestra – produce and air Outdoor Pops Concert
5. Riverfest- multiple live shots and reports from major 4th of July weekend community event
6. American Cancer Society – air news stories and produce/air no charge spots leading up to 2 major fundraisers “Fall Relay For Life” and “Spring Run/Walk”.
7. Grand Excursion- air news stories and live shots from event celebrating 150th Anniversary of Riverboat use of Mississippi River. Produce and air no charge spots for the same.
8. Sands on The Riverfront- air news stories and produce/air no charge spots leading up to major fundraiser for business that enables employment of disabled adults.
9. Top Notch Teacher- produce news story monthly honoring a local “Top Notch Teacher.” Also produce/air “Call for Nomination” promotion spots for program.
10. Alzheimer’s Memory Walk- produce/air no charge spots leading up to fundraiser event.
11. Oktoberfest Parade- 3 hour LIVE Broadcast of major community parade.
12. Fire Safety Week- air news stories annually leading up to Fire Safety Week.
13. DARE Chili Cook Off- produce/air no charge promotion spots for annual fundraiser and have station personnel cook at event.
14. Healthlink Hotline Phone-a-thon- produce/air no charge spots leading up to sponsored event about topical health issue (including cardiac care, peri-menopause and children’s health screening).
15. Great American Toy Test- air news stories about newest toys on the market. Station pays for and donates toys to local charitable agencies who have their kids try out the toys.

16. Big Brothers/BigSisters Bowl for Kids Sake- produce/air no charge promotion spots for annual fundraiser.
17. WKBT 50th Anniversary Open House- almost 600 people attended 50th Anniversary event. Viewers got to see a mock newscast and what goes on behind the scenes with very close access to anchors.
18. Special Olympics Polar Plunge- produce/air no charge spots for annual fundraiser AND do LIVE Shot news cut-ins the day of event.
19. Star Reading at Elementary Schools- station anchors volunteer time to read stories at local school.
20. Kidsfest- station sponsored fingerprinting of kids in case of abduction Community Asthma Screening Day- news stories and station sponsored event where individuals could get free asthma screening. Outstanding Women's
21. Logger for a Day (Kids)- produce/air no charge spots encouraging kids to be a "Logger for a Day" where kid gets to hang out with local baseball team members before that evenings game.
22. Sox & Sweats- produce/air no charge spots to collect socks and sweats for Salvation Army.
23. Pet of the Week – Humane Society- air twice weekly stories encouraging people to adopt pets from the Humane Society.
23. Children's Museum Partnership- made 2,000 cash donation and helped raise addition 15,000 to buy an exhibit. Weather anchors routinely make presentations to school groups at the Museum about weather
24. Toys for Tots- produce/air no charge spots for annual cash/gift drive for needy children.
25. Excellence In Education- produce/air sponsored segments where local students pair up with station anchors to tell story about famous people who made history.
26. United Funds for the Arts and Humanities- produce/air no charge spots for fundraising purposes including \$500 cash donation.
27. Operation Care Packages- aired news story and produce/air no charge spots encouraging viewers to buy supplies for troops being deployed
28. Rotary International Friendship Garden- aired news story and produce/air no charge spots for fundraising purposes.
29. Girl Scouts "Cookies For Troops"- aired news story and produce/air no charge no charge spots encouraging viewers to buy cookies for hospitalized troops.

Board Memberships

Station General Manager is a Board Member of the LaCrosse Rotary Foundation and The LaCrosse Children's Museum. He is an advisory Board Member of Viterbo College. Station News Director is a member of Golden Key Society, Station Program Director is a Board Member of The Mississippi Valley Archeology Center and The United Funds for the Arts and Humanities